

Capt. Frank Cosley, Southampton, Ont.

Interviewed by Wm. Wakeham and Richard Rathbun,

September 6, 1894.

Experience
I have been fishing for 20 years right

q.
P. along. I have always lived here. This is about 65 miles from the entrance of Georgian Bay. Gill nets are the principal fishery here. There are no pound nets here at all. *P.*

There are none between here and Georgian Bay.

They have fished pound nets down in Sable Bay south of here. I do not know of any

pound nets between here and Goderich. They

Fykes.
Seines do not fish fyke nets here. There is no seine fishing here now, but there used to be.

They used to fish seines on the Sable beach and catch an immense lot of herring at one

Hooks time. There is no hook and line fishing of any quantity. They catch a few little her-

ring about 6 inches long in the winter. It is very seldom that they get any trout then. They seined here up to last year. This fishing place north of us used to be an Indian reservation and the Government put the whites off it 2 years ago, and the Indians bought all their outfits and starved to death at it. The whites caught a lot of herring in the fall before that. They have seined since I came here and before that. Each man had a seine and I think 1/4 mile of beach was his allowance, and the beach was about 5 miles long. That is from Sable River south for 5 miles. They also fished seines on a couple of islands north of Chiefs Point in the southern part of the Fishing Islands, the first island you come to, which they call Whitefish Island. The bag of the seine was 2 inches I think. The wings would be larger. There are 2 or 3 sizes of the wings. They

Winter
herring
trout

Seine
history

Ind. reserv.
Loc.

Area to each
man

Describe

*Seine**method**loc.
shore**Season
herring**w.f.
small w.f.**destruction
w.f.**trout*

will be large at the end and get smaller as they come to the bag. It took 5 or 6 men to pull one seine in. The place where they fished then was sandy bottom. If seines could be used up above the islands it would be a mint for a person, but it is all rock there so they cannot haul them. They fished the seines only in the Fall for herring. They used to fish a little in the spring, but not very much. They would get herring in the spring and some large whitefish. They would not take small whitefish in the spring. In the fall they used to start seining in September, about the middle, and fish through October and up to November, but there was not very much done after October. I have heard very many complaints of the decrease of whitefish being caused by the seines, but I could not say for myself whether they did or not. They would not get many

*Series
fresh
walleye
by
tugs
boats*

trout in the seines. They would get no perch, but would accidentally get some pickerel. This year there are 5 tugs fishing gill nets, and there were 6 the biggest part of the time, and there were 6 or 7 sail boats. There are more than that now because a lot came down from the Georgian Bay. There has been 4 come down from the Georgian Bay, so that there would be about 10 sail boats here now. There have never been more tugs here than now. There were no tugs here when I came here. They began to fish from here about 7 years ago, and they have gradually increased since. Of course, it is the men of the town who fish them. They are owned here. The Buffalo Company owns one of the boats this year. Logey & McCauley own 3 tugs this year. They used to have more sail boats and less tugs. When I first came here there were not as many sail boats as now,

Q.

but I have seen as many as 20 boats here about 10 or 12 years ago. Some of the sail boats dropped off before the tugs came here because fishing got poor and they would lose money, and the Buffalo Company got to fishing here and they run the poor fishermen out.

We use both herring and trout nets in the fall. The herring nets are 2 3/4-inch and they are 50 meshes deep. We have had them 18 meshes, but they are not that now. We have them as low as 12 or 14 meshes deep.

The size of the mesh is 5 1/2-inch. Trout nets and whitefish nets are different. The mesh in the whitefish nets is 4 1/2 and 4 3/4. They are 18 meshes deep. We use the trout nets about the last of August. Do not use it in the spring. We begin to use it the last of August and use it until we finish up. We use the whitefish nets in the spring as soon as we start. As a rule they

Fish
decrease

Have both trout
and herring Q.

Herring Q.
decrease

Q.
decrease

Season

9.

start about the first of April. They start as soon as navigation is open. They generally quit the summer fishing the last of August; that is, the sail boats; but the tugs fish out on the reef right through the summer. The sail boats as a rule quit about the last of August. They do not take the whitefish nets up again until the next spring. The herring nets are not used much until the last of October. They are not used in the spring. We fish them through November. The close season does not apply to the herring nets. They will fish herring nets all through November. The water freezes up here about December 15. There has been some fishing done here in the winter, but not much; that is, under the ice. They could not make it pay. For one reason, you can hardly ever get ice that is fit to fish on as it is too rough. We would some-

Herring 9.
Season

Date of freezing up

winter fishing

times fish for suckers in the winter, but never for whitefish or trout. They have set whitefish nets in the winter, but never got more than 2 or 3. The tugs do not use herring nets at all. They use the whitefish nets and some trout nets in the fall. The sail boats start in about the last of August and fish for trout and herring. As a rule when the trout go out there is about a week or so of herring fishing. Sometimes there is a lot of herring netting in the water. Each man is supposed to have about 8 or 10 nets. There would be about 40 or 50 boats up at the islands where I fish in the fall, but they come from different places. There would be probably 6 or 7 go from here. The herring fishing is done about the Fishing Islands, and up as far as Cape Hurd. We used to be able to catch the fish inside of the islands altogether, but now you cannot.

White
suckers
by
trout

Tugs use no
herring g.
Set g. in fall.

Sail boats
g.
season
trout
herring

Herring g.
ant.

big to man
no boats

Herring g.
C.C.

Herring g.

They have to go on the outside of the shoals now. The herring are not on the inside now and you have to go to the open lake for them. There are shoals of water there that run out in the lake 2 or 3 miles. Some say the

level of water

cause of it is that the water has gone down 2 or 3 feet. I never heard the Fishing Islands called by any other name. The her-

Descrip.

ring nets have about 50 leads and they are 6 feet apart. The net is so deep that you have to have more corks on it than on the

How set.

other nets. The herring nets are all set on the bottom. There is no particular way of setting them only to get in shallow water

bottom

about the depth of the net. It is stony bottom where we fish them. They occasionally

Take trout occasionally nothing else no way.

get a trout in the herring nets, but nothing else. Do not get any whitefish. The her-^{Herring}

Herring size

ring run pretty big size here. We get lots of herring 12 inches long, but the average

*Herring g.
Herring
size
mesh*

would be about 10 inches. We do not get any small ones in the herring nets, as they go through. We will get them as small as 8 inches. As a rule these small ones gill in the mesh. I would judge that the herring would average about 1/2 pound. It takes about 15 dozen to 100 pounds. They set the nets sometimes within a stone's throw of the beach, and we never go out very far with the herring nets. Go out sometimes half a mile, but it depends upon the weather. Around the islands we would go out half a mile from the islands. The herring are not as plenty as they used to be. They do not come as early now. We used to catch lots of them in October, but now you cannot get them in that month at all hardly. We have never fished the herring in the spring. The herring have decreased, or at least we do not catch as many as we used to. They fish for them just

Loc.

*Herring
abund.
Season*

*Fishing as
extensive now
as ever.*

*Herring
abundant*

as much as they did when I started in. They may be just as thick as they used to be, but where we have to go to catch them we cannot go only in fine weather. It used to be so we could set in any weather, rough or smooth, when they came in the best around the islands, and perhaps that is the reason why there are not so many caught. I can safely say that there is not 100 packages caught now for every 400 that were caught years ago, and there are just as many fish for them.

*Level of
water*

The water is about 2 feet lower than it used to be. It has raised a little this summer, however. I think it began to fall 10 or 12 years ago. We used to catch the herring entirely behind the islands and did not fish outside at all. It used to be deeper water where we used to catch them inside the islands than it is now. There is a chain of islands run along for about 20 miles close together and there is a channel between the

See

Herring
islands and inside of that there may be a mile where there is no islands at all and that is where we used to catch them. We used to catch a good many in Stokes Bay.

*water
and*
That water has not been fouled in any way.

There are mills in there and they used to

*sawdust
market*
let the sawdust run in the water, but they do not now. Those herring are shipped to

Canadian markets. They were nearly all salt-
ed then. We used to freeze a few, but not
of any account. There was not money enough

*9.
season*
in it to pay for freezing. The large trout
nets are used from about the last of August
until November. The tugs and sail boats

both fish them. The boats fished only the
trout nets then, but the tugs fished both
for awhile, but quit them after a short time.

boat rig
A sail boat will use about 20 nets if there
are 2 men in a boat, and if there are 3 men

tug rig
she would want about 30. The tugs generally

4. have about 60 nets. The sail boats would have 30 nets in 3 gangs and the tugs would have 60 nets in 2 gangs. If a tug was properly fitted out, he would have to have about 36 nets to a gang and have about 3 gangs. They have fished that number. The trout nets are about 70 leads and 8 feet apart. The whitefish nets the leads are 9 feet apart. Whitefish nets the tugs use 36 nets to a gang, and some have 5 gangs to a tug. The sail boats would have about 18 nets to a gang and fish about 4 gangs. They are longer than the trout nets. They run from 80 to 100 leads and they are 9 feet apart. A No. 60 thread will run 100 leads and No. 50 about 80 leads. The finer the twine is the more fish they will catch, but the fine twine is a little costlier. In deep water the coarser twine will catch about as many fish and they are cheaper. They use the fine twine

descrip.)

*Finer twine catches more fish
76.*

2.
Season
Loc.
depth

for the inside fishing. The sail boats in the spring go to deep water as soon as they begin. To get deep water they have to go 12 or 15 miles. They fish inside of 12 miles also. In the spring they hardly ever go in to less than 30 fathoms for a month or 2, and will go up to 70 or 80 fathoms. They do not go very far up or down the coast, but go about straight out, either west or north-west. They go south-west sometimes, but hardly ever. They go west south-west sometimes. There is sail boat fishing up off the Fishing Islands in the summer season. After the spring fishing, about July, they will go up and down the shore. They will go 25 miles north and about 10 or 15 miles south. In the summer they fish in any depth of water and all over. A sail boat would not go over 15 or 16 miles from land. In the fall the sail boats some of them go up

4. the shore and some fish here about the last of this month. They will not fish 25 miles up in the fall, however. They do not go out over 6 or 7 miles from land in the fall. In the spring the tugs go to deep water as soon as they start. They will go out farther than the boats, but the farther they go the shallower the water they get. They go out on the reefs as early as they can go. They fish up the coast at least half way to Cape Hurd. They go 40 or 50 miles out now about west by north, right straight out in the lake. They fish on the big reef out there. All the region about here is fished with gill nets. You can fish for trout in about 2 feet of water in the fall, but ordinarily they fish for trout in about 18 fathoms. They get nothing but trout on the big reef and they get them all through the year. They use the whitefish nets for trout all through

trout
depth
etc.
season

4.
trout
casc.
var.
size

the year except in the fall when they are fishing larger mesh for the fall trout. The trout they catch on the big reef you cannot get until in the fall? They are a different kind of fish and are smaller and have a big belly on them, and the others are hard and slim. These trout will run about 4 pounds. They do not get many small ones. The fall trout are big fellows running about 8 and 10 pounds. We get them in shallow water sometimes and in deep water sometimes, 18 or 19 fathoms. I do not know when the trout spawn. I have caught them with the spawn running from them most any time after the last of October. I have seen the spawn in them pretty ripe about that time. And then again you will fish on up to the last thing and there will be some with spawn in along in November. I never saw spawn running freely in October. I have taken them with the spawn running

g/running

Q.
about

from them in November. That is what they call the fall trout. I have caught summer trout with spawn in also out on the big reef. You will catch them most any time with spawn in them. Will catch them during the summer with the spawn running sometimes. I believe there are some trout spawning all the time. That would be in 25 or 30 fathoms. You will get some with ripe spawn in the spring occasionally. Lots of times on the reefs when dressing the fish in the summer you will come across them with spawn loose in them. I never fish on the reefs after the last of August. The tugs run out there later than that. But I have heard them say they caught them with spawn in them at all times. Trout are not as abundant as they used to be. There has been quite a decrease. You cannot catch as many now as you could. The most falling off has been in the shallow water

Q.
season
over

decrease

4.
Front

trout. The spring and summer fishery is better in proportion than the fall fishery. I guess we have not done as well fishing for the last 6 or 7 years as we used to do.

Sometimes one man will have a streak of luck and get good catches and the man next to him might not get any. Years ago everybody used to do pretty well. I do not think there has been any difference in the size. In the spring you cannot get any whitefish in places around this coast without you go to 16 or 18 fathoms for them and you can hardly get any at all, even there, but that is where we used to catch them years ago and they get a few there now. We used to fish for them from here to the north of Sable. In the summer there are no whitefish caught here of any quantity. We do not fish for them at all in the fall. We get some large whitefish here weighing 10 or 12 pounds in

Size

W. f.
season
lowdecrease
size

the trout nets, but only an odd one. The old whitefish grounds were from 18 to 20 fathoms of water about 5 or 6 miles from here and up as far as Stokes Bay on the outside grounds, and up to Big Island. We do not get 1/4 of the whitefish we used to. The best season for them used to be June and July. I do not know as there are any spawning grounds for whitefish here. There has been a few caught around the Fishing Islands in the fall, but not many. I do not think the whitefish run smaller in size than formerly. When we fished here in November we were not able to do much fishing as the weather was too rough. In the gill nets we got herring, whitefish and trout. We got no pickerel. I have caught one pickerel this summer. Pickerel are not taken here at all. Do not get the yellow perch in the gill nets, but catch an odd one in the herring nets.

q.
w.f.

5/ spawning

size
Nov. rough

9 catch
herring
w.f.
trout
valley

perch

cy
valley

in the gills

We have the black bass here, but there are
 very few caught. I have not known a cat-
 fish to be caught here. I have known stur-
 geon to be caught here, but there never has
 been many caught here. We get the lawyer.
 Get no sheepshead in the nets, but catch
 them with the hook and line in the river
 here. You can get pike in the gill nets pro-
 viding you set for them, but they are never
 fished for here. They occur in muddy bottom
 in the bays around the little islands. We
 get the maskinonge here and generally catch
 them with the pike. Have no German carp
 here. We get lots of suckers in the white-
 fish gill nets. We get the moon-eye here in
 deep water in the whitefish nets. We do not
 get the menominee whitefish here that I know
 of. Do not get the yellow fin or long-jaw.
 Pound nets are not allowed about here is the
 reason they do not fish them. They are a

9
 bass
 cat

Sturgeon

Ling
 Sheepshead

Eel

maskinonge

G. carp

suckers

moon-eye

menominee

bluefin
 long-jaw

P.

P. kind of net I do not know anything about. They have applied for licenses here to fish them. You could not very well fish them on the shore here, but you could fish them up among the islands. Those islands are above the Indian reservation. There are not very many fish destroyed in the gill nets. If it happens to blow 3 or 4 days and you do not get out to your nets perhaps a few fish caught the first night are not fit to ship, but as a rule they are fit to salt. Here you do not get any small whitefish in the gill nets, but in Georgian Bay you will get small ones. I think about 2 pounds is about as small as I have seen caught in the net. The size of the mesh in the herring gill net I think is all right as it is. I think any bigger than that you would let them through and any smaller than that you would not catch them at all. I believe if the white-

q.
cond. fish

Small w/f

Herring q.
mesh o.k.

*W. J. G.
proper mesh*
fish net was a little larger in the mesh
they might not get as many fish, but might
get just as much in weight. A 2 pound white-
*W. J.
size*
fish is a fair fish up in the Georgian Bay,
but you do not get any small ones here. A
min. size
whitefish weighing 1 1/3 pounds dressed
would be a nice lump of a fish for market.
*Y
loss.*
They lose considerable gill netting by
storms sometimes. The fishermen about here *ago*
occupation
have no other occupation except fishing. It
takes them all the winter to get their out-
fits ready for the next year. A man who
fishes here makes a business of it and does
nothing else. There is no spearing done
spearing
here, and I do not think it was ever done
offal
here. The fish offal is used for oil. There
is none of it thrown back into the lake. I
could not say that it does any harm to throw
it back, but the most of the men seem to
think it does harm. I have never seen much

offal thrown in in my time. They make quite a little oil here from that. It used to be worth 40 cents a gallon, but it is down a little now. They used to sell some of it here to the tanneries, but the most of it goes to the refineries and they fix it over and make it pure. There has been no trouble from the refuse of saw mills here. There used to be a few little mills up at Golden Valley, and the fishermen used to say they thought that was the reason why the herring did not come into the bays. The tanneries here did harm to the hook and line fishing in the river. They used to catch pickerel, bass and pike in the river, but now you can hardly get any. I do not think it hurts the lake any, however. The Government has dredged the harbor this year. One year they took the north of the river and dumped it in as close to the shore as they could get and

Saw mills

Tanneries

River fishes

dredging

another year they took it south and dumped it close to that shore. They dumped it close to the shore I guess because they thought it would wash in on the shore. The tanneries run both winter and summer. We get a few herring in the river here in the winter. The rafting does harm to the gill nets I am sure. There is not enough rafting to do any harm close in here, however. There has been no complaint out here on the reef yet either. Georgian Bay is the only place I know of where it has done any harm. I think the oil factory burn the refuse after they extract the oil from it. There used to be 2 refineries here, but now there is but one. No fish are caught here for fertilizing purposes. The decrease in the whitefish has been caused by their being caught off. They never took any small whitefish here in gill nets and I do not think the seines

Lumber
River fishes
back.

fertilizer

w.f.
decrease
over fishing

small w.f.
2
Seines

caught them enough to cause the decrease entirely. The decrease in the trout I think is caused by other fish destroying their spawn, and it may be the same with whitefish.

There are a great many suckers around here. We generally find the suckers just at the edges of the rocks between the mud bottom and the rock bottom in 10 or 12 fathoms, and

in the winter you can catch them close in to any stream. The suckers certainly destroy more spawn in one season than all the

fishermen together in a year. I do not know how the whitefish could be kept here if they were put back here. The whitefish feed

chiefly on worms. We used to see the worms when we were fishing for whitefish and we get them on the nets now. I do not think we bring up as many of those worms, however, as we used to. At one time it was so you could scoop the worms right off the boat. I have

Trout
decrease
cause

Suckers

W. f. if put
back, how to
preserve

food.

never seen that food as thick in the Georgian Bay as here. The spring close season ^{Reg}

has no effect here as we have no pickerel or bass fishing. There are no restrictions but the size of the mesh and the close season in November. I think those restrictions are

all right. I do not think you could get up ⁹ any better size net than we have now. I do not think they catch too many small fish.

We do not get any whitefish in the same ^{herring} place that we get the herring, but get an odd trout occasionally where you catch herring. You will set a herring net and not get anything in it but herring, except perhaps an odd trout. No whitefish, pickerel or any other kind of fish. I think it is ^{Reg}

right enough to pay a license, but I say let everybody fish that wants to. I do not

think there would be too many fishing then because it takes a good fisherman to make a

Close season

trallup
bass.

Nov.

9.

Size mesh.

Herring
w. b.
assava
trout

Herring 9.

Herring
trout
w. b.
trallup

License

Let all fish.

No. of men
must regulate
itself.

living at it. I do not think there would be any difference in the number of people fishing, as they would not make it pay. I do not know as it would have been any better if there had not been so many nets fished in the beginning. There is lots of room in the harbor for more fishermen, and I do not think if there were 10 more fishermen here it would make my catch any smaller. The river is full enough and there is hardly room for them in the harbor, but that is on account of the shallow water. I do not think the tug fishing has hurt the fishing. Some men here are still making money fishing tugs. On the Georgian Bay it has been a failure this year for the tugs, so I have heard. The boat fishermen have only made an ordinary living out of the fishing. The boat fishing is nearly done in this region right here. The decrease seems to be mainly near the

*More fishermen
might not
have caused
more decrease*

*Harbor
limited*

*Tugs have not
hurt fishing*

*Boat fishing
decrease*

*Decrease
mainly
near shore*

shore in the shallow water, and you cannot get far enough away with the sail boats. If you cannot get fish in one place with a tug, you can go to another, and perhaps the place you left in 3 or 4 weeks will be just as good as the place you went to so you can go back again, and so on. If you want to go to work to fish to make money, you might better get in a tug than a fish boat. If the tug fishing was prohibited, it would probably break up the fishing pretty well, unless we might get more fish in the sail boats if there were no tugs. We do not fish in November for whitefish or trout at all. If the close season was extended to herring, it would stop the fishing right up. We would fish for trout through all of November if we could, as the weather is good enough for fishing then. I think the trout fishing would be all right enough in November, not-

*Fygs have
greater range
and can
change.*

*catch of herring
& boats
compared.*

Close season

*would stop
herring.*

*could fish
for trout
in Nov.*

withstanding the rough water and the danger of losing nets. If there was no close season here, I think we would get more fish than we do. I think if we caught the fish in November it would cause them to decrease more. They have planted fish here, but not very much, only once to my knowledge. I think it was trout. I forget whether it was this summer or last summer. They just went outside here a piece. I think they have planted quite a few in Georgian Bay. It is the general opinion among the fishermen that the planting of artificially hatched fish is a good idea and should be continued, and on a larger scale. It would be easy to get spawning trout here in the fall, but you could not get whitefish here. You might get a few whitefish on the back of the islands, but it is so late in the fall that you would hardly ever get weather to do it. You could

With no close season could get more fish would cause more decrease

Hatching

*trout
w. f.
spawning*

Finger

get trout up there, too, as well as here.

Georgian Bay would be the best place, as it is the place where they catch them the most.

Fishermen returning to shore.

I have never taken eggs from whitefish and mixed the milt with them, and I do not know how to do it. I think if the fishermen were requested to take the eggs and milt and mix them and return them to the water they would do it. But you might be able to do it sometimes, and sometimes you could not do it.

Throwing out small fish

In stormy weather you could not do it very well. I think the under sized fish could be separated and put back in the water alive.

Went N.Y.

We put little trout back and they are just as lively as ever, but we never get little whitefish. There are not very many little ones that would be dead, as they do not gill, but just catch by their teeth, and they are all thrown back in the water and live. We get the bloat, or little minnows, as we call

bloat

then here, in deep water. The minute they
come to the surface, they burst, as they are
all swollen up. We have to prick our trout J
when they come up, as they are swollen some.
I saw a pound net one time take out 199 stur-
geon on the Grant Islands in Georgian Bay.

Mr. Cosley is a native born Canadian with
French blood.

Just bloat

Sturgeon

